

Feature Article

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The Materials Handling Partner Selection Process – Improving Your Profits with Proper Selection Criteria

Selecting a materials handling partner based on the price of a forklift or other equipment is like choosing a wife or husband because they're going to benefit you monetarily. In the long-run neither party benefits and the relationship fails, to find both parties moving on, having lost all the years of what could be been synergistic advantages. Choosing a materials handling partner is very similar.

Certainly, the equipment must be within your budget confines, but instead of simply looking at quotes, looking at the partner and what that dealership can bring to the relationship could far out-weigh any immediate cost savings. It is important to choose a partner with similar values and the ability to service your account, bring new ideas and fresh outlooks to the table. You want a partner who's looking out for your best interest at all times, not simply demonstrating new equipment that they can sell to you.

Some things you can do to help in the selection process:

1. Treat your meetings, particularly the initial meeting, as an interview. Ask questions of the dealership representative like;
 - a. What are your company's core values, mission, and business philosophy? See if the answer is in line with yours.
 - b. Give me examples of times you've solved a customer's material handling problem and what was the outcome.
 - c. Why do you want to do business with our company? See how much they know about you, have they done their homework?
2. During your meetings pay attention where their attention is going. Is their attention on your operation? Or are they fixed on presenting product features, talking about themselves, their business etc...?
3. Did the representative ask for a facility tour? If so, are notes being taken, pictures snapped (if you allow this).
4. Make a simple request for a quote for some racking or a piece of equipment. See how promptly they return with your information and how it is prepared and presented. Sloppy work three days later might be an indication of how things operate within that dealership.
5. Ask to see their facility. Is it orderly? Are things kept neatly and does the staff seem happy? Did they know you were coming and ready to greet you with enthusiasm. Was top management there to greet you? And how much interest do THEY show in learning about you, helping you solve problems, etc...

For more information contact us at 410-344-1801, or visit us on the web: www.matthaimaterialhandling.com

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6. If the dealership will be doing service, ask to speak to the service manager. Gauge the interest level and look how this person interacts with their department personnel.
7. Ask to see a service van or two. Does it look like it has been lived in for three years? Is it clean (as can be, with a service van) and does it appear stocked with parts, tools and supplies to get the job done on-site?
8. Ask for KPI's (Key Performance Indicators). If they have these readily available it will help demonstrate that they are on top of their game and trying to improve their service delivery to you.
9. Ask what businesses similar to yours that they service and supply products to. Then ask if you may contact their customer for a reference, then do it! Unlike HR departments who have to be careful about what they say about employees, a customer is free to give you candid opinions about what the dealership does well, and not so well. If they don't give you negatives, then ask "what could they do better?"
10. After an appointment or two, and the representative has had time to get to know your company, ask for input about what they see that could be improved upon at their facility. If they've been taking notes and paying attention they should be able to, at the very least, hold out one or two possible areas for improvement.

A little due diligence can go a long way in securing a relationship where you have a partner, looking out for your materials handling operation. A partner like this can add thousands; if not tens of thousands of dollars to your bottom line every year by help YOU improve YOUR business, thereby benefitting THEIR business. A partner that understands this is the kind of partner you want for the long-haul.

Matthai Material Handling is a customer-focused company that forges relationships by listening, asking questions, getting to know YOU, our customer. We know that if we help YOU solve YOUR materials handling problems, we will be rewarded with YOUR business, time and time again.

We know YOU have choices and we would like the opportunity to earn your business. Visit us on the web at www.matthaimaterialhandling.com then give us a call to meet with one of our account representatives. You'll be glad you did!